

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 OMB-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 AID-20 RSR-01 /116 W
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R 230337Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 578

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 6829

FOLL TEL SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD INFO
AMCONSUL KARACHI 22 AUG FROM AMCONSUL LAHORE
REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAHORE 0994

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SWEL, PK

SUBJECT: FLOODS AND POLITICS

REF: LAHORE 0983

BEGIN SUMMARY: PERHAPS NOT SURPRISINGLY, LOCAL POLITICS
HAVE BEEN INJECTED INTO PAKISTANI FLOOD RELIEF EFFORTS
IN PUNJAB. PARTIES ARE COMPETING IN ESSENTIALLY INEFFECTIVE
RELIEF EFFORTS DRESSED UP WITH ALMOST-CARNIVAL TRAPPINGS.
REPORTS ARE THAT PPP IS MUSCLING OUT RELIEF COMPETITION FROM
OTHER PARTIES. IN ANY CASE, OPPOSITION EFFORTS STARTED
LATE AND UDF LEADERS IN LAHORE HAVE APPEARED MORE CONCERNED
ABOUT DEBATING PLANS TO OPEN CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN
AUGUST 24 THAN TO WORRY ABOUT FLOOD RELIEF. IF UDF LAUNCHES
CAMPAIGN, IT WILL LOSE POLITICAL GROUND IN PUNJAB BECAUSE OF
FLOODS. END SUMMARY

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1. POLITICAL PARTIES OF ALL STRIPES IN PUNJAB HAVE ORGANIZED

FLOOD RELIEF CENTERS, MOSTLY IN HIGHLY VISIBLE SPOTS ON MAJOR HIGHWAYS IN OUTSKIRTS OF LAHORE (AND PROBABLY OTHER MAJOR TOWNS). CENTERS ARE DISTURBINGLY SUGGESTIVE OF CARNIVAL BOOTHS, BEING DECORATED WITH PARTY COLORS, HOUSED IN BRIGHT SHAMIANAS AND HUNG WITH GARISH POSTERS. MOST DISPLAY PHOTOGRAPHS OF PARTY LEADERS AND ARE FREQUENTLY NAMED FOR PARTY NOTABLES (USUALLY LOCAL MPA, IF NOT NATIONAL LEADER). CONGEN TOURS THROUGH AREA REVEAL LITTLE USEFUL ACTIVITY AT CENTERS, AND PAUCITY OF USEFUL EQUIPMENT OR SUPPLIES.

2. PPP IS USING ITS STRENGTH IN PUNJAB, AS WELL AS LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES, TO CROWD OUT OTHER POLITICAL PARTY RELIEF OPERATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, JI AMIR TUFAIL MUHAMMAD CHARGED IN PRESS (AND WE HAVE HEARD STORY INDEPENDENTLY FROM USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCES) THAT APPROXIMATELY WEEK AGO AUTHORITIES ORDERED JI RELIEF CAMP ACROSS RAVI BRIDGE IN SHAHDARA CLOSED BECAUSE MILITARY RELIEF TEAM NEEDED SITE, BUT WHEN JI PULLED OUT, PPP OCCUPIED LOCATION UNDER PROTECTION ITS PEOPLES GUARDS. WE HAVE HEARD OTHER STORIES OF SIMILAR MANEUVERS. PROVINCIAL GOVT LEADERS TOURING FLOOD AFFECTED AREAS REPORTEDLY MAKE SURE THAT FLOOD VICTIMS IDENTIFY PPP WITH GOVT'S FLOOD RELIEF EFFORTS. HOWEVER, GOVERNOR KHAR IN TOURING SHAHDARA AREA DURING HEIGHT OF FLOOD VISITED ONE TEHRIK BOOTH AS WELL AS THOSE OF HIS OWN PARTY.

3. UDF PARTIES WERE STRANGELY SILENT DURING FIRST WEEK OF FLOODS, IN SHARP CONTRAST TO PPP LEADERS WHO VIED WITH EACH OTHER IN MAKING SYMPATHETIC STATEMENTS. RATHER UNINSPIRED STATEMENTS BY OPPOSITION LEADERS BEGAN TO APPEAR ONLY AFTER THEY GATHERED IN LAHORE TO CONFER ON PLANS FOR WIDELY HERALDED CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 24. IT WAS NOT UNTIL AUGUST 20 THAT NAP, JUP, CML, PJP LEADERS (INCLUDING WALI KHAN) AND ONE INDEPENDENT (MAZARI) WERE REPORTED TO HAVE VISITED FLOOD-AFFECTED AREAS ALONG RAVI RIVER WHERE THEY TOLD ACCOMPANYING OPPOSITION PRESS THAT GOP WAS NOT HANDLING SITUATION PROPERLY. MEANWHILE, OPPOSITION PRESS CONTINUES TO COMPLAIN THAT OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE NOT ASSISTED PAKISTAN SUFFICIENTLY IN PRESENT CRISIS.

4. UPSHOT OF POLITICKING HAS BEEN TO CREATE IMPRESSION OF
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DISORGANIZED AND DISJOINTED RELIEF PROGRAM, WITH POLITICIANS, PARTICULARLY PPP, MAKING EFFORTS TO BE SEEN AND HEARD, BEMOANING "PAKISTAN'S WORST DISASTER," WHILE FIGHTING EACH OTHER FOR RELIEF RESOURCES FOR THEIR OWN FOLLOWERS. THUS PRESS OF VARIOUS POLITICAL SHADES IS FOUND EXTOLLING LEADERS FROM PM BHUTTO TO AIR MARSHALL ASGHAR KHAN FOR VARIETY OF VAGUE VIRTUES, BUT UNABLE TO REPORT MUCH IN WAY OF CONCRETE POLITICAL PARTY ACTION ON BEHALF OF FLOOD VICTIMS.

5. COMMENT: OPPOSITION WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE NO ONE BUT ITSELF TO BLAME FOR ITS POOR SHOWING IN RELIEF WORK. PUNJAB FLOODS OVERWHELMINGLY MAJOR CONCERN HERE DURING THIS WET SUMMER, WITH MOST PUNJABIS WELL IF NOT PAINFULLY AWARE OF ADDITIONAL HARDSHIP IMPOSED. SILENCE OF OPPOSITION RANKS UNTIL LATE IN PERIOD OF FLOOD CRISIS RANKLED MANY HERE, INCLUDING SOME STAUNCH OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS SUCH AS NEWSPAPER NAWAI WAQT. FURTHERMORE, AS FLOOD TIDE MOVED INTO SOUTHERN PART OF PROVINCE, AND PEOPLE BEGAN TO DIG OUT FROM UNDER MUD IN NORTH, UDF LEADERS HAVE BEEN SPENDING DAYS IN ARGUING WHETHER OR NOT THEY SHOULD GO AHEAD WITH CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN PROMISED FOR AUGUST 24. IN DISPLAY OF HIS ASTUTE POLITICAL SENSE, BHUTTO STRUCK RESPONSIVE CHORD IN PUNJAB WHEN (IN JHANG ON AUGUST 19) HE CASTIGATED OPPOSITION FOR APATHY TO CRISIS, AND FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE THREATS AT TIME WHEN SITUATION CALLED FOR COOPERATION. OUR JUDGEMENT IS THAT UDF WILL SPARK RESENTMENT, AND LOSE POLITICAL GROUND IN PUNJAB, IF IT CARRIES THROUGH WITH ITS PLANS FOR AUGUST 24.

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